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RUEHKT/AMEMBASSY KATHMANDU 9105
RUEHNE/AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI 9914
RUEHLO/AMEMBASSY LONDON 1707
RUEHOT/AMEMBASSY OTTAWA 0693
RUEHBY/AMEMBASSY CANBERRA 0327
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TAGS: [PTER](#) [KISL](#) [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [BG](#)
SUBJECT: TERRORISM UPDATE IN BANGLADESH

REF: A. DHAKA 0390
[1](#)B. DHAKA 0656

Classified By: Ambassador Patricia Butenis, reason para 1.4 d.

[1](#)1. (S) Summary: Although there has been no major terrorist incident in Bangladesh since December 2005, the steady stream of alleged militant arrests since December 2006, the seizure of bomb-making material across the country, and the May 1 "cracker" bombs at three city railroad stations indicate growing terrorist ferment. Media, police, and other observers speculate JMB remnants are trying to reorganize into smaller, seemingly new groups with plans for a new wave of attacks. In her upcoming farewell calls, the Ambassador will press the government for fuller assessments of capabilities and intentions of JMB and other groups, and the status of new investigations announced for three high-level political attacks with possible Islamist terrorist connections. End summary.

POLICE RAIDS AS TERRORISTS REGROUP

[1](#)2. (SBU) In the first four months of 2007, Bangladeshi security forces raided suspected terrorist hideouts throughout Bangladesh, recovering bomb-making materials and weapons, and arresting dozens of alleged members of Jamaatul Mujahidin Bangladesh (JMB), the banned terrorist group responsible for a series of bombings and suicide attacks in late 2005. Arrested JMB leaders included sub-commander in the Raninagar district Kairul Islam alias Montu Doctor, Jamalpur-Sherpur regional chief Masud Rana, and JMB leader Bangla Bhai's aide, Mahatab Khamaru.

[1](#)3. (C) Police sources and Bangladeshi media report the raids unearthed several possibly new terrorist groups. When Barisal police arrested ten members of the previously unknown Hizbe Abu Omar, it reportedly determined they had once belonged to Harkatul Jihad Bangladesh (HUJI-B), another banned terrorist group with a long if not recent history of violence in Bangladesh.

[1](#)4. (SBU) Police suspect a possible JMB connection among the seemingly separate organizations Allahar Dal, Hizbe Abe Omar (later called Taamir Ud-Deen), and Insaf. According to media reports, JMB has reorganized under a new executive committee led by Maulana Abu Jafar Abdullah of Sylhet, while another JMB break away group, Allahar Dal, was organized under Matin Mehdi (who was arrested on April 18), and Taamir Ud-Deen was organized under Maulana Abdur Rouf. In the wake of the March

executions of the six senior JMB leaders, these groups reportedly reconstituted themselves into a reorganized JMB but retained tactical independence at the local level.

EXECUTION OF JMB LEADERS

¶5. (S) In the weeks leading up to the executions, the police developed information that JMB might try to abduct the U.S. ambassador or envoys from other western nations to prevent or protest the pending JMB executions (ref A). JMB cadres reportedly threatened to kill 50 people for each leader hanged, while separately a HUJI-B cell threatened to kill several journalists in Dinajpur. Police and local government officials speculate that it was the JMB who in April killed the prosecutor who presented the charges against the top JMB leaders, although the Home Secretary downplayed the possibility by suggesting to us it was the result of a family dispute (Ref B).

¶6. (C) After the executions, speculation mounted regarding a JMB response. Citing police sources, media reported that JMB units would focus on small bombs to draw in police responders, who would then be attacked by a second bomb (much like the last JMB suicide attack in December 2005). They also said that JMB is moving to use clean-shaven and non-punjabi wearing cadres working in small groups, using deception such as wearing uniforms of the Rapid Action Battalion (RAB), and using women attackers as suicide bombers. To date, however, none of this has actually happened.

MAY 1 FIRECRACKERS

¶7. (SBU) Near each of the May 1 triple 'firecracker' bomb sites authorities found the same message: "The Kadianis and NGOs prepare for Death. It is forbidden to work in NGOs and having relations with Kadianis. All NGOs must leave by May 10, all Kadianis must recognize Prophet Mohammed as the last and best prophet and if you fail to do it before the aforesaid time, your death is a must. Zadid al-Qaeda." (Note: Kadianis is a pejorative for Ahmadiyyas). The May 10 deadline passed without incident.

¶8. (C) Before moving on to judges and lawyers, JMB in early 2005 attacked NGOs for their alleged anti-Islamic activities, and other extremist Islamist groups have conducted an occasionally violent campaign against Ahmadiyyas, although the government clamped down on anti-Ahmadiyya violence and the last outbreak occurred in April 2006. Ahmadiyyas number no more than 100,000 in a country of 145 million, and are potentially vulnerable since many Bangladeshis believe that Ahmadiyyas are heretics.

¶9. (S) We have no evidence to suggest that Zadid al-Qaeda or any other variant of that name in Bangladesh is in fact connected to UBL's Al-Qaeda. Local media continue to report, without much public comment, threats from these groups, including one on May 13 from "Al-Qaeda" threatening to kill three judges in Barisal if they went to work May 13 or May 14.

COMMENT

¶10. (S) While the acid test is the continuing absence of a major terrorist incident, even after the JMB executions, we are concerned by the implications of the continuing arrests, weapon seizures, public threats from allegedly JMB and other groups, and speculation that JMB is reorganizing and determined to resume terrorist operations in the near future.

We are also concerned by the continuing reluctance of Bangladeshi authorities -- most recently on the threat against Westerners cited in para 5 -- to share threat information with us freely and promptly. In addition, the current government identified counterterrorism as a top priority when it took office in January, but it also claims a vastly improved public security situation as one of its chief

accomplishments, and the Home Secretary's unconvincing attribution of the JMB prosecutor's death to a family quarrel may reflect government sensitivity to any perception of a growing terrorist menace.

¶11. (C) The current government announced new investigations of the 2004 attack on the British High Commissioner, the 2004 grenade attack on Sheikh Hasina and other Awami League leaders in Dhaka, and the 2004 assassination of Awami League elder statesman Shah Kibria, all of which may have Islamist militant connections. The government continues to detain two HUJIB operatives who reportedly confessed to the attacks on the British High Commissioner and Kibria, although eight non-HUJIB members remain in jail and under suspended trial for allegedly killing Kibria. The trial of HUJIB leader Mufti Hannan continues episodically on several terrorist-related charges.

¶12. (C) As the Ambassador makes her farewell calls on senior government and military leaders, she will press for information on the status of these investigations and the government's assessment of the capabilities and intentions of JMB and other groups. In our public and private focus on returning Bangladesh to an elected government, we will not lose sight of the equally important need to continue pressing the government remain fully engaged on counterterrorism issues in Bangladesh and elsewhere.
BUTENIS